**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday, 25th March 2020**

***\*Picture attached***

**Devastating impact of Covid-19 highlighted as The Alzheimer Society of Ireland postpones Alzheimer’s Tea Day and launches urgent appeal for vital dementia supports**

* Public Health Emergency ‘perfect storm’ for charity
* Severe drop in fundraising of €1 million
* Isolated people with dementia and family carers bearing the brunt

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) has announced the postponement of its largest annual fundraising campaign Alzheimer’s Tea Day due to ***Covid-19*** and has launched an urgent appeal for vital dementia supports to help them to continue their vital work with people with dementia and their families during this devastating crisis.

Covid-19 has resulted in a ***perfect storm*** for The ASI: Alzheimer’s Tea Day, its biggest and most important fundraiser over the past 25 years which was due to take place in every town in Ireland on Thursday, May 7th, is now postponed contributing to a severe drop in fundraising of €1 million; its 48 day care centres are closed; and its vital supports such as Social Clubs, Alzheimer Cafes and Support Groups are all postponed until further notice.

However, The ASI ***continues to support people with dementia and their families*** as our Home Care, Dementia Advisers, National Helpline and Online Family Carer Training are all still running. In addition we are implementing new ways of providing ASI supports remotely to our clients and their families such as regular telephone calls and activity packages for people to use in their own homes.

Most people who are living with dementia are in the high-risk category for Covid-19 and most of their carers - their husbands and wives - are also older and many have ***underlying health conditions***. And now, with the majority of ASI’s supports now closed, thousands of vulnerable people are facing this emergency alone, without the supports and constant care that they urgently need.

As part of the urgent appeal, members of the public are being asked to make a special emergency donation today on [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie) to help provide essential care and support to those living with dementia whose ***lives are being torn apart*** by Covid-19.

**The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s CEO, Pat McLoughlin said:**

*“Covid-19 is a public health emergency we have never seen the likes of before and this is affecting everyone on the planet. People with dementia are vulnerable and often confused and Covid-19 has heightened that for them. Today, we should all be preparing for the Alzheimer’s Tea Day, our biggest and most important fundraising event of the year. Alzheimer’s Tea Day has been our biggest fundraising event over the last 25 years and the organisation is so dependent on the funds that it brings in each and every year. However, the Covid-19 health crisis means that Alzheimer’s Tea Day has now been postponed and the vital funds it raises have been lost, so we are asking for your help to continue to support people with dementia and their families and carers.*

*“Our day centres; social clubs; Alzheimer cafés; face to face carer training plus many other services we provide are now closed due to Covid 19 and this is putting even more pressure on people with dementia, their families and carers, isolating them further and causing further stress and ill health. We must continue to raise money to provide alternative supports to assist our clients and their families. We must keep our helpline, home care, dementia advisor services and online family carer training open. We must stay connected with people with dementia and their families at this time, that's why we really need your support -  to keep going, keep supporting and keep connecting.”*

**The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Operations Manager, Mary Bardin said:**

*“Caring for somebody with dementia can be a difficult and lonely journey. But now people living with dementia have to isolate themselves even further from their family and friends – and from essential supports like the services that we provide. We have already been forced to close all 48 of our Day Care Centres across Ireland and that means that, right now, thousands of vulnerable people are facing this emergency alone, without the supports and constant care that they urgently need. That’s why everyone here in The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is working around the clock to help provide alternative emergency supports to the people who need them most, but we need your help to do that.”*

**Member of Dementia Carers Campaign Network (DCCN) and full-time carer for her Dad, Brian, Máire Anne Doyle said:**

*“I’ve been caring full-time for my Dad, Brian, since moving home from Toronto for over four years ago. It's a privilege to be with my Dad, he's a super guy and a really good Dad. However as his Carer it's an around the clock task, a stressful one that has taken its toll. The current lack of support and feeling of isolation is phenomenal. Something has to be done. Carers who look after people living with dementia can't keep struggling. We literally are in crisis here. The home help we get is my only relief and is absolutely invaluable to me and thousands of others.”*

**Member of Dementia Carers Campaign Network (DCCN) and full-time carer for his Mam Cathleen,****Éamon Ó Fearghail said:**

*“I’ve been caring for my mam Cathleen since she was first diagnosed with dementia nearly 10 years ago and now with some health issues of my own I am struggling to manage by myself. She attended a Day Care centre three days a week but now that has been closed. Mam must remain at home so that I can keep her safe and I am now caring for her 24 hours a day. The home help we get from the Alzheimer Society is absolutely invaluable to me and thousands of others.”*

**Consultant Physician in Geriatric and Stroke Medicine, Tallaght Hospital, Prof Sean Kennelly said:**

*“Caring for a loved one living with dementia can be lonely and exhausting at any time. Those who do so are absolute heroes. But they seldom if ever reach out for help. So today during this Covid 19 crisis it is vital that we ‘reach in’ to support them. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland are an incredibly important resource right now. And they will be even more important over the next few weeks and months. They will be needed now more than ever.”*

Covid-19 has undoubtedly caused ***additional challenges*** for older people who may already be vulnerable and particularly those who struggle with health conditions, loneliness, and isolation.

The ASI has developed some ***tip sheets*** to help support people with dementia and their families in a challenging and rapidly changing situation including the following:

* *Tips for vulnerable adults*
* *Tips for supporting vulnerable people in the community*
* *Tips for nursing home restrictions*
* *Supports available from organisations in Ireland during COVID-19*

All of these resources are available on [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie/)

For more information on our supports and services during this challenging time, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline is open six days a week Monday to Friday 10am–5pm and Saturday 10am–4pm on 1800 341 341. Email at helpline@alzheimer.ie or via Live Chat at [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie/)

**Website:** [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie/)

**ENDS**

**For more information contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Officer Lisa Gernon at** **lisa.gernon@alzheimer.ie** **or 086 029 5634**

***About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI):***The ASI is the national leader in understanding and providing dementia-specific supports and services. With a national network of over 120 specialist services, 900 staff and 300 volunteers, each year they provide almost 900,000 hours of community-based, dementia-specific care throughout Ireland. For more information see www.alzheimer.ie.

**ABOUT DEMENTIA**
• The number of people with dementia in Ireland is expected to more than double from 55,000 today to 141,200 in 2050.\*
• Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions which cause changes and damage to the brain.
• Dementia is progressive. There is currently no cure. Dementia is not simply a health issue but a social issue that requires a community response.
• The majority of people with dementia (63%) live at home in the community. Over 180,000 people in Ireland are currently or have been carers for a family member or partner with dementia with many more providing support and care in other ways.
• There are 11,000 new cases of dementia in Ireland each year. That’s at least 30 people every day and anyone can get dementia - even people in their 30s/40s/50s.\*\*
• 1 in 10 people diagnosed with dementia in Ireland are under 65.
• The overall cost of dementia care in Ireland is just over €1.69 billion per annum; 48% of this is attributable to family care; 43% is accounted for by residential care; formal health and social care services contribute only 9% to the total cost

*Figures referenced to Cahill, S. & Pierce, M. (2013) The Prevalence of Dementia in Ireland*

*\*Figure referenced from Alzheimer Europe (2020)* *Dementia in Europe Yearbook 2019 ‘Estimating the prevalence of dementia in Europe’*

*\*\*Figure referenced from Pierse, T., O’Shea, E. and Carney P. (2018) Estimates of the prevalence, incidence and severity of dementia in Ireland.*